

Chris Darling and former director of operations Sherwood Johnson.

As we mark the 10th anniversary of the Harkin school grant program in Iowa, I am obliged to point out that many thousands of school buildings and facilities across the United States are in dire need of renovation or replacement. In my State of Iowa alone, according to a recent study, some 79 percent of public schools need to be upgraded or repaired. The harsh reality is that the average age of school buildings in the United States is nearly 50 years.

Too often, our children visit ultra-modern shopping malls and gleaming sports arenas on weekends, but during the week go to school in rundown or antiquated facilities. This sends exactly the wrong message to our young people about our priorities. We have to do better.

That is why I am deeply grateful to the professionals and parents in the Fort Dodge Community School District. There is no question that a quality public education for every child is a top priority in that community. I salute them, and wish them a very successful new school year.●

HINTON COMMUNITY EDUCATION

● Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, in Iowa and across the United States, a new school year has begun. As you know, Iowa public schools have an excellent reputation nationwide, and Iowa students' test scores are among the highest in the Nation.

I would like to take just a few minutes, today, to salute the dedicated teachers, administrators, and school board members in the Hinton Community School District, and to report on their participation in a unique Federal partnership to repair and modernize school facilities.

This fall marks the 10th year of the Iowa Demonstration Construction Grant Program. That is its formal name, but it is better known among educators in Iowa as the program of Harkin grants for Iowa public schools. Since 1998, I have been fortunate to secure a total of \$121 million for the State government in Iowa, which selects worthy school districts to receive these grants for a range of renovation and repair efforts—everything from updating fire safety systems to building new schools or renovating existing facilities. In many cases, this Federal funding is used to leverage public and/or private local funding, so it often has a tremendous multiplier effect in a local school district.

The Hinton Community School District received a 2003 Harkin grant totaling \$234,475 which it used to help build an addition to the elementary school for preschool and child care programs. The Federal grant has made it possible for the district to provide quality and safe schools for their students.

Excellent schools do not just pop up like mushrooms after a rain. They are

the product of vision, leadership, persistence, and a tremendous amount of collaboration among local officials and concerned citizens. I salute the entire staff, administration, and governance in the Hinton Community School District. In particular, I would like to recognize the leadership of the board of education—Steve Eddy, Ed Vondrak, Rob Held, Lynette Blanchard and Randy Riediger and former board members Michelle Rodgers and Kenneth Hoefling. I would also like to recognize superintendent Allen Steen and curriculum director and principal Jane Krebbiel.

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NORTHWOOD-KENSETT COMMUNITY EDUCATION

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I would like to take just a few minutes, today, to salute the dedicated teachers, administrators, and school board members in the Northwood-Kensett Community School District, and to report on their participation in a unique Federal partnership to repair and modernize school facilities.

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cilities. In many cases, this Federal funding is used to leverage public and/or private local funding, so it often has a tremendous multiplier effect in a local school district.

The Northwood-Kensett Community School District received a 2002 Harkin grant totaling \$112,500 which it used to help replace the roof at the elementary school. The district also received two fire safety grants totaling \$66,280 to install a fire alarm system and to make other repairs at the elementary school and to install heat detectors and to make other safety improvements at the high school. The Federal grants have made it possible for the district to provide quality and safe schools for their students.

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SOUTHEAST WARREN COMMUNITY EDUCATION

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